

Mr. Tappe's April Fool Joke—And Its Sequel

Who Would Have Ever Thought That the Frolicsome Tricks Played on Miss Meer, His Serious Minded "Saleslady," Would End Up in the Courts!



"Ah! The Princess!" the proprietor exclaimed, gathering in Miss Meer and moving to the front of the establishment where a gorgeous creature stood. "Perhaps Your Highness will permit Miss Meer to attend you and show you whatever may appeal to Your Highness's fancy," said Mr. Tappe with a low bow.

This is a Photograph of "The Princess"—Miss Helen Szabo of Mr. Tappe's Millinery Department, Who Was Picked Out to Play the Chief Part in the April Fool Joke.

It was April 1—April Fool's Day. Mr. Herman Patrick Tappe, the very well-known and fashionable New York milliner and creator of gorgeous gowns, strolled into his establishment, just off Fifth avenue, with a merry smile on his face—he had an inspiration for a joke!

"Miss Meer," he called to one of the saleswomen, "there will be a customer here today that I want you to give special attention to. She is a Princess—Princess Rolland of Hungary. Mary Garden is sending her here. I think she will order a large number of expensive gowns."

"Oh! Then I shall show you what I can do with customers of real quality," said Miss Meer with a little flutter of pleasurable anticipation. "I'm Hungarian, too, you know."

Passing on to the rear of the shop Mr. Tappe called Mr. Lewis, the manager, and said:

"You've told me that Miss Meer says she would show you what a marvel of a saleswoman she is if she only had a chance at the right kind of customer. I'm going to give her a chance."

"Yes," replied Mr. Lewis, noting the twinkle in the proprietor's eye. "You're right. It's an April Fool joke. I'm going to pick up Miss Szabo, of the millinery department, and have her arrive in a car as a Hungarian Princess. I've told Miss Meer a 'Princess' is coming and to see what she can do."

In the millinery department, several floors above, Mr. Tappe found Miss Szabo and explained his joke.

"Can you play the part of a Princess, do you think?" he asked.

"Oh, assuredly I can, Mr. Tappe," she replied with enthusiasm. "But Miss Meer knows me."

"Oh, go ahead," said the proprietor. "You can discuss your voice and manner, and you'd better wear this hat here with the veil effect which partially covers the eyes. Pick out from the stock something rich to dress the part. Go out after you've dressed and drive up in a limousine and I'll present you."

Mr. Tappe strolled around the establishment and in due time Mr. Lewis came briskly to the back of the shop. "The Princess is here," he announced.

"Ah, the Princess!" the proprietor exclaimed, gathering in Miss Meer and moving to the front of the house, where a gorgeous creature stood, resplendently gowned and veiled, with several loose pearls about the neck, and with quite an impressive touch of hauteur in her manner, and not a little of the bored, languid air of royalty in the poise of her tall, stately figure.

"Perhaps your Highness will permit Miss Meer to attend you and show you whatever may appeal to your Highness's fancy," said Mr. Tappe with a very low bow and his hand on his heart.

Miss Meer courted, bowed and reverently kissed the princely glove. Then Mr. Tappe ventured to suggest that perhaps Her Highness might permit her to begin by showing some wraps.

"Oh, very well. It is to me in indifferent whether you exhibit first," the "Princess" replied in the broken English of a foreigner.

Miss Meer broke out in voluble Hungarian. "I, too, am Hungarian, your Highness," she exclaimed. "It is truly a great pleasure, as well as a privilege, to serve a Hungarian Princess."

"Take her up the painted staircase," said Mr. Tappe in English. "That's more fitting for a Princess than that beastly elevator."

Two floors above the "Princess" began ordering clothes with a truly regal nonchalance. Her tastes were very decided and she had no comments to make—other than "I will take that one" or "No, that one will not do."

Miss Meer was concentrating all her skill as a saleswoman upon the task. The "Princess," with not a little condescension, told her that she was going to Europe in about ten days and requested her order be filled with as much speed as possible. So Miss Meer argued with Mr. Tappe for the privilege of selling her royal customer the actual model gowns themselves instead of selling her copies of the gowns she chose. This is at variance with all the rules of the Tappe house, but Miss Meer won her point after much pleading. Also she made her own prices for the various articles. She could see that the Princess was in the mood to buy anything that pleased her—my! how rich she must be!

So in a few minutes the Princess had selected two stunning evening wraps. And then the dainty Tappe mannequins glided in one after another, clad in shimmering evening gowns, promoted slowly after the immemorial custom of their trade, and made their exit. As each gown was shown Miss Meer explained its superiority to Her Highness. The Princess ordered one evening gown, one dinner gown and an afternoon dress—all exquisite and all expensive.

"You see," said Miss Meer to Mr. Tappe and the girls of his establishment, who stood around wide-eyed in the background, "you see, blood will tell! The Princess's taste is unerring. She has selected the very finest gowns in the place. And you see what can be done with the right kind of customer by the right kind of saleslady!" And she suggested that this incident would prove her right to an advance in salary.

Here there was a slight interruption. One of the other saleswomen—who was in the secret—pretended to find that one of the gowns just sold was one she wanted for a customer of her own. She and Miss Meer engaged in a polite but slightly acid conversation over the matter.

"But this is a PRINCESS," Miss Meer protested. "So far as I have anything to do with it she's going to get anything she wants, and the actual models, too, not just copies." And so she did. Mr. Tappe, as umpire, of course, decided in favor of royalty.

Then the Princess bought two sport dresses, and a multitude of hats, and even a cushion that formed part of the decorations of the room. And by this time she was buying practically anything Miss Meer recommended.

No one knows exactly how much she



This is Mrs. Tappe Who Is an Important Figure in the Establishment and Assisted in Making a Success of the April Fool Frolics.

Mr. Herman Tappe Who Conceived and Executed the April Fool Joke

and Now Is Asked to Come Into Court and Tell All About It.

bought; it was between five and ten thousand dollars worth. And all in a half-hour! Furthermore, on leaving, she told Miss Meer to come to her at the Ritz-Carlton with anything else she thought the "Princess" would like.

What wonder that Miss Meer was in the seventh heaven of happiness. She rushed into the millinery department to tell Helen Szabo, her fellow Hungarian, all about it. Helen did not appear immediately, but when she had changed from her royal costume to her working clothes, she, too, became excited and complimented Miss Meer and wished she had been there to see the "Princess"—the "Princess" who had been herself!

Then Mr. Tappe told Miss Meer that she would better put all the Royal purchases in a separate room and lock the door. "Don't want these other girls taking those models for their customers," he said. "So lock the door and keep the key."

Which Miss Meer did. And which she excitedly told the other girls. Also she confided that the "Princess" had said something about a little gift, and had asked her

if she liked sapphires. "I told her of course that I did," Miss Meer said. "But that I thought something like diamonds might be more suitable for wearing. There are so many things I couldn't wear a sapphire with, you know, but a diamond—well, that I could wear all the time. But do you suppose the 'Princess' really means to send me a jewel? I've heard that they often do."

And lo! Next morning came a messenger with a note in Hungarian on Ritz-Carlton stationery and a jeweler's box in which reposed a very showy sapphire ring—which had cost little Helen Goldbach, of the Tappe firm, just a dollar.

Every girl in the Tappe establishment was shown the ring and made haste to admire it. The note said that the Princess was leaving town that day, unexpectedly, and would Miss Meer hurry the work along. Miss Meer would most certainly do so.

But this was going a little too far to suit Mr. Lewis, the manager. Mr. Lewis is a business man; he likes a joke, but he couldn't bring himself to think of a few thousand dollars worth of goods altered in the execution of the joke—which to Mr. Tappe was only a detail and a slight one.

So Mr. Lewis halted the work of alteration. "Princess or no Princess," he said, "we must have a deposit on the cost of the goods before a single ribbon is altered."

Miss Meer was terribly upset. She knew the effect of such an insult upon royalty. She told Mr. Lewis in stinging words just what she thought of his penny-pinching policy. Then Mr. Lewis, forgetting about the joke, got peeved, too.

"Don't let them kid you," he said. "I'll bet your Princess is nothing but a faker." This was too much for Miss Meer. She demanded that the goods be altered immediately or she would notify Mr. Tappe.

"Why, for heaven's sake, forget it," said the manager. "You're crazy!"

"It is a shame—but I'll take the bill to her myself right now," she said. "If any-

body can get her to pay an advance without insulting her, I can. The rest of you don't know how to deal with royalty. You haven't the tact."

"No Princess here," said the clerk.

Which did not astonish Miss Meer. She knew the ways of travelling royalty. "Of course, I know," she said, showing the clerk the note in Hungarian. "She's travelling incognito. Her room is 910 and I shall go to it and see her."

And when she knocked on the door of 910 a man stuck his head out. "Aha! she thought, no wonder Her Highness is travelling incognito! And she explained to the man that she was discreet and might not see the Princess. To the man her explanation was more than confusing. When Miss Meer insisted on seeing some mysterious Princess who, she said, was in that very room, the man called the house detective. Miss Meer, protesting, was shown to the elevator.

Back at Tappe's she telephoned the Princess. She knew that the Princess would explain. The telephone operator at Tappe's switched Miss Meer's call to Helen Szabo, the "Princess" in the millinery department. Miss Meer told of her visit. "Oh, my dear, please tell no one," said "Her Highness." "If this gets out I shall be ruined!" Miss Meer promised secrecy.

But she just had to tell the secret to Helen Szabo, her Hungarian fellow-employee!

And that night she took the sapphire ring to her jeweller. And she couldn't resist telling him how she got it. The jeweller thought of April 1. And he looked at the ring.

"Hard to tell about sapphires at night," he said. "But this may well be worth \$150. Mind, I don't say it is—but it might!"

One hundred and fifty dollars for a present! There was no use to tell Miss Meer that the Princess was not the real thing after that.

And the next day—the third day of the joke—she flashed the ring in Mr. Lewis's face and asked him if he still thought the Princess was a fake.

Mr. Lewis did. He said so.

There was a quarrel. The other girls joined in, trying to explain to Miss Meer that the whole thing was a joke. She wouldn't be convinced. Then she resigned or was discharged—just which is not clear.

So much for Mr. Tappe's April Fool joke as Mr. Tappe and Mr. Lewis and Anna and Miss Szabo and some twenty or thirty saleswomen, models, mannequins, millinery girls and others recall and retell the details.

But Miss Meer did not seem to think it was at all funny. The more she thought about that bogus "Princess" and that ring with the glass sapphire in it and every thing the madder she got, and she went to see a lawyer.

Lawyers, of course, can't be expected to have any sense of humor, and this is the solemn, cold, funless way Miss Meer's lawyer put her side of the case in the suit against Mr. Tappe for \$15,000.

SUPREME COURT, NEW YORK COUNTY, LEONA MEER, Plaintiff, against

HERMAN P. TAPPE, Defendant. Plaintiff by E. Paul Yaselli, her attorney, complaining of defendant, alleges:

FIRST—That the plaintiff is and for many years has been a resident of the County of New York, and that her profession or occupation has been that of saleslady.

SECOND—That on or about the first day of April, 1920, plaintiff was in the employ of Herman P. Tappe, Inc., of which concern the defendant herein is and has been at all times hereinafter mentioned the president. That plaintiff was employed in the capacity of saleslady.

THIRD—That on or about the first day of April, 1920, plaintiff was informed by the defendant that a princess would be in to see plaintiff for the purpose of buying some expensive gowns. That a woman representing herself to be a princess did on or about the 1st day of April, 1920, buy or agree to buy several expensive gowns. That plaintiff attended to said princess' wants in good faith.

FOURTH—On information and belief that on or about the 3d day of April, 1920, defendant falsely and maliciously and with intent to injure the plaintiff in her good name, credit and in her profession or occupation as aforesaid as saleslady and to cause it to be believed that by that said false and malicious statement plaintiff had become incompetent to perform the said duties of her said profession or occupation and was an unfit person to be intrusted with the duties of said profession or occupation, as a result of her efforts to sell gowns to the woman that the defendant stated was a princess, made certain defamatory statements concerning plaintiff in her capacity as saleslady in the presence of others; to wit: "You are crazy."

FIFTH—Upon information and belief that said false and libellous statements aforesaid of and concerning the plaintiff in her said occupation or profession, tended to produce great damage to plaintiff and to cause it to be believed by and among her neighbors and acquaintances that plaintiff has become mentally incompetent to perform the duties of such occupation or profession and was an unsafe person to be intrusted with the duties appertaining to said profession or occupation. That in consequence of the aforesaid defamatory statements plaintiff was dismissed from her employment, was subjected to contempt and ridicule, became sick and disabled and suffered great humiliation and damage.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff demands judgment against the defendant for fifteen thousand (\$15,000) dollars with interest thereon from the 1st day of April, 1920, together with the costs and disbursements of this action.

E. PAUL YASELLI, Attorney for the Plaintiff.

And that is Miss Meer's side of it. Although, by the way, she has got another position with a dressmaking house nearby.

When the case is tried it should be one worth attending. For into the gloomy, solemn courtroom will troop the twenty or thirty girls of the Tappe establishment—all chosen for their good looks and good figures—models, saleswomen, milliners—over Mrs. Tappe—who was the famous Anna, Mr. Tappe's model. And Mr. Tappe, with his \$15,000 sense of humor will be there, and Mr. Lewis whose sense of humor doesn't run into five figures, and even the uniformed doorman and carriage opener who attended to various details of the joke.

If the case comes to trial the writer will endeavor to be there and give the readers of this page a full report of what happens.